

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 043033

46

ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/CCA:WLSIMMONS/INR/RAR:DSMITH:JM

APPROVED BY ARA - HEWSON A. RYAN (ACTING)

AF/C - MR. FUGIT

EUR/NE - MR. CROWLEY

ARA/CCA - MR. SMITH

S/S- MR. ORTIZ

INR/DDC/OP - MR. DE TARR

----- 129267

R 231737Z FEB 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION USNATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T STATE 043033

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO, US

SUBJECT: CHRONOLOGY OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 043033

REF: STATE 036239

THERE FOLLOWS ANALYSIS OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA:

1. CASTRO'S STATEMENTS THAT NO CUBANS WERE FIGHTING IN ANGOLA UNTIL SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES BEGAN THEIR PUSH NORTH ON OCTOBER 23 ARE NOT STRICTLY TRUE. MOST CUBAN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN ANGOLA AT THAT TIME WERE EVIDENTLY PERFORMING TRAINING AND ADVISORY FUNCTIONS, BUT SOME CUBAN TROOPS WERE PROBABLY INVOLVED TO A LIMITED DEGREE IN MPLA COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING OCTOBER AND POSSIBLY EARLIER. SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIONS APPARENTLY HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON THE CUBAN TROOP BUILD-UP OF PERHAPS 2,000 MEN DURING SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER. DIRECT ZAIRIAN AND INDIRECT CHINESE INVOLVEMENT PROBABLY DID STRONGLY INFLUENCE CUBAN DECISIONS AT THAT TIME.

2. NEVERTHELESS, THE BIG CUBAN INFLUX BEGINNING IN NOVEMBER ALMOST CERTAINLY WAS LARGELY DUE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN-LED OFFENSIVE AND THE LOSS OF STRATEGIC AREAS OF SOUTH-CENTRAL ANGOLA. NOVEMBER ALSO SAW A CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF THE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT, AS CUBAN UNITS BEGAN CONDUCTING THEIR OWN COMBAT OPERATIONS SEPARATELY AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH MPLA FORCES.

3. TO MID-1975. FOR AT LEAST A DECADE, CUBA HAS PROVIDED TRAINERS AND ADVISORS TO THE MPLA ALONG WITH A LIMITED AMOUNT OF MATERIAL ASSISTANCE. UNTIL 1975, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CUBANS WORKING WITH THE MPLA PROBABLY DID NOT EXCEED 100 AT ANY GIVEN TIME. MOST OF THESE WERE APPARENTLY BASED IN THE CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE), THOUGH A FEW MAY HAVE BEEN INFILTRATED INTO ANGOLA.

4. AS A RESULT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL DURING 1974, CUBAN (AND OTHER FOREIGN) ATTENTION TO ANGOLA INCREASED, AS ALL THREE ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS BEGAN JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AND SEEKING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE. THE FNLA, WHICH HAD BEEN RECEIVING CHINESE AND ZAIRIAN SUPPORT, BEGAN MOVING TROOPS INTO LUANDA AND NORTHERN ANGOLA IN NOVEMBER 1974. THE MPLA ALSO BEGAN MOVING TROOPS INTO
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 043033

LUANDA ABOUT THE SAME TIME. FIGHTING BETWEEN THE FNLA AND THE MPLA BROKE OUT IN LATE 1974 AND MORE SERIOUSLY IN MARCH AND APRIL 1975. THE CUBANS HAVE ADMITTED TO SENDING ABOUT 230 ADVISORS TO ANGOLA IN LATE SPRING, PROBABLY TO ASSIST MPLA EFFORTS TO OUST THE FNLA FROM THE LUANDA AREA AND CABINDA.

5. IN LATE JUNE, THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL

RESPONSIBLE FOR MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE MPLA MET IN MOZAMBIQUE WITH AGOSTINHO NETO, PRESUMABLY TO COORDINATE FUTURE OPERATIONS. SOMETIME DURING JULY, 42 CUBAN MILITARY PERSONNEL REPORTEDLY ARRIVED IN THE CONGO TO ASSIST IN REASSEMBLING SOVIET WEAPONS BEING SUPPLIED TO THE MPLA. ALSO IN MID-JULY, ZAIRE SENT A COMMANDO COMPANY AND AN ARMORED CAR SQUADRON INTO ANGOLA IN SUPPORT OF THE FNLA, WHICH HAD BEEN ALL BUT ELIMINATED FROM LUANDA. DURING THE SECOND WEEK OF AUGUST, TWO ZAIRIAN PARATROOP COMPANIES WERE ALSO SENT TO ANGOLA, AND SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES OCCUPIED THE CUNENE DAM COMPLEX IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA.

6. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT (ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE CLANDESTINE SOURCE) MPLA REPRESENTATIVES ASKED FOR SOVIET TROOP SUPPORT (LATE JULY-EARLY AUGUST) AND WERE TOLD TO APPROACH THE CUBANS INSTEAD. SENIOR CUBAN OFFICIALS IN LUANDA WERE RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA OF SUPPLYING CUBAN COMBAT FORCES AND PRESSED THE ISSUE IN HAVANA, USING BOTH PRACTICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS TO CONVINCE AN INITIALLY RELUCTANT FIDEL CASTRO. THE DECISION WAS REPORTEDLY MADE IN MID-AUGUST. AT THE TIME, NEITHER THE CUBANS NOR THE MPLA WERE APPARENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENTRY OF SOUTH AFRICA INTO THE CONFLICT, WHICH THEY CONSIDERED IMPROBABLE. RATHER, THEY REPORTEDLY FEARED ZAIRIAN INTERVENTION AND CONSIDERABLY OVERESTIMATED ZAIRE'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES.

7. THE INITIAL BUILD-UP: SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER.

THE FIRST CUBAN SHIP, CARRYING ABOUT 120 TROOPS, LEFT HAVANA IN EARLY SEPTEMBER AND ARRIVED IN POINTE NOIRE (CONGO) ON SEPTEMBER 24. FOUR OTHER SHIPS CARRYING MEN AND MILITARY MATERIEL LEFT CUBA IN MID-AND LATE-SEPTEMBER

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 043033

ARRIVING IN CONGO AND ANGOLA IN EARLY AND MID-OCTOBER. THESE MAY HAVE CARRIED AS MANY AS 1500 MEN.

8. THE CUBANS ALSO BEGAN SENDING TROOPS BY AIR ON SEPTEMBER 30 AT THE RATE OF ONE FLIGHT PER WEEK THROUGH THE END OF OCTOBER. THESE FIVE FLIGHTS PROBABLY CARRIED ABOUT 400 MEN TO BRAZZAVILLE AND/OR LUANDA BY OCTOBER 28.

9. THE CUBAN TROOPS WERE EVIDENTLY ASSIGNED A VARIETY OF TASKS. MANY WERE DETAILED EITHER AS INDIVIDUALS OR IN SMALL GROUPS TO MPLA UNITS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AS TRAINERS AND ADVISORS. OTHERS WERE GIVEN SUPPORT ROLES IN COMMUNICATIONS, LOGISTICS, MEDICAL SERVICES, ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSES, AND IN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND LUANDA. THE CUBANS ALSO REPORTEDLY SET UP INFANTRY TRAINING CAMPS

NEAR BENGUELA AND LUSO TO GIVE CRASH INFANTRY TRAINING TO MPLA FORCES.

10. EVIDENCE CONCERNING CUBAN PARTICIPATION IN COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING THIS PERIOD (SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER) IS INCONCLUSIVE. SOME CUBAN TROOPS PROBABLY WENT INTO COMBAT AGAINST THE FNLA AND ZAIRIANS IN THE NORTH WITH THE MPLA UNITS TO WHICH THEY WERE ATTACHED. CUBANS ASSIGNED TO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS NEAR LOBITO AND OTHER TOWNS ON THE BENGUELA RAILROAD ALSO ENGAGED IN COMBAT WHEN THE

UNITA/SOUTH AFRICAN OFFENSIVE BEGAN DURING THE LAST WEEK OF OCTOBER. THERE IS, HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE THAT CUBANS WERE CONDUCTING AUTONOMOUS COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING THIS PERIOD.

11. THE ZAIRIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA ALSO INCREASED DURING SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER:

-- TWO UNDERSTRENGTH ZAIRIAN BATTALIONS WERE SENT TO AMBRIZ IN MID-AND LATE SEPTEMBER, AND ANOTHER BATTALION ENTERED IN LATE OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER.

-- SOUTH AFRICAN SHIPMENTS OF MILITARY MATERIEL TO THE FNLA AND UNITA BEGAN IN SEPTEMBER, AND SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY ADVISORS ESTABLISHED A SMALL TRAINING BASE FOR
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 043033

THE FNLA IN SOUTHEASTERN ANGOLA IN THE LATTER PART OF THAT MONTH.

-- IN EARLY OCTOBER, SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES SUPPLIED FIRE SUPPORT FOR UNITA AGAINST THE MPLA IN SOUTH-CENTRAL ANGOLA.

-- BEGINNING IN MID-OCTOBER, BUT PARTICULARLY AFTER OCTOBER 23, A SOUTH AFRICAN STRIKE FORCE ENTERED ANGOLA AND CAPTURED THE MAJOR SOUTHERN CITIES AND LOBITO-BENGUELA.

12. THE MASSIVE BUILD-UP: NOVEMBER-JANUARY.

THE EVENTS OF LATE OCTOBER CLEARLY AFFECTED THE RATE OF CUBAN TROOP MOVEMENTS TO ANGOLA. THE AIRLIFT STEPPED UP MARKEDLY AND AVERAGED FIVE FLIGHTS PER WEEK DURING NOVEMBER AND EARLY DECEMBER. THE SEALIFT ALSO INCREASED, AND 10 CUBAN VESSELS ARRIVED IN THE CONGO-ANGOLA AREA DURING DECEMBER. THE NUMBER OF TROOPS THEY CARRIED IS UNKNOWN, BUT THEY COULD HAVE ACCOMMODATED PERHAPS 3,000. BOTH AIR AND SEA-LIFT CONTINUED THROUGH LATE JANUARY, AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CUBAN TROOPS IN THE AREA HAS APPARENT-

LY LEVELLED OFF AT ABOUT 10,000-12,000.

13. THE NATURE OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT ALSO CHANGED, AS CUBAN COMBAT UNITS BEGAN TO ENGAGE OPPOSING FORCES IN CENTRAL AND NORTHERN ANGOLA--SOMETIMES, BUT NOT ALWAYS IN CONJUNCTION WITH MPLA FORCES. BY MID-DECEMBER AND JANUARY, THE CUBAN FORCES WERE CLEARLY IN CONTROL AND BEARING THE BRUNT OF COMBAT OPERATIONS. INGERSOLL

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, MILITARY BUILDUP, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE043033
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WLSIMMONS/INR/RAR:DSMITH:JM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760070-0874
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760222/aaaaatjg.tel
Line Count: 231
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 36239
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <09 AUG 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHRONOLOGY OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA SECRET
TAGS: PFOR, AO, US, CU
To: STOCKHOLM MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006